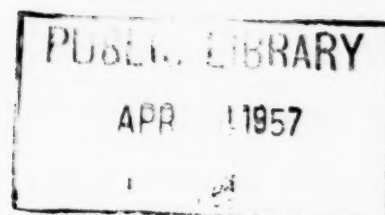


PHILOSOPHY, ✓  
RELIGION AND  
EDUCATION

# CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS



*A Christian Journal of Opinion*

## Ghana In Christian Focus

We rejoice in the peaceful, constructive progress of the Gold Coast colony into the responsible nation of Ghana. Substantial credits are due to African development and leadership, in the training of which the British civil servants and the Christian schools have played leading parts, and to the loyal fulfilment of the British program of advance to self-government.

Ghana joins India, Pakistan, and Ceylon as recent additions to the membership of the Commonwealth. These are nations of color in friendly and cooperative relationships with Britain, Canada, Australia and company. Such associations are of high value in our divided world, bridging the gulfs of distance, race and culture. The concept of partnership, with its affirmations over against the lethal *apartheid*, is pictured in the simple, human terms of the Duchess of Kent, as the personal representative of Elizabeth II, dancing a two-step with Nkrumah, who has come from the bush through Achimota College and Lincoln University.

The new nation faces difficulties in economic development and is anxious over its heavy dependence upon the cocoa market. Yet this people of four millions is relatively better off than most of its African, Asian and Latin-American brethren. For it produces nearly half the world's cocoa and ranks second in manganese, with other important mineral resources. The officials of Ghana have been tempted by the ready funds available through the Cocoa Marketing Board, and the struggle for probity continues. Despite its considerable merit, administrative efficiency is not automatic in a state where secondary and technical education is still limited, and the extensive northern territories are

largely illiterate. Indeed, divisions by tribes and by cultural interests are expressed in a regionalism that strives for federal organization, as against the centralizing drive of the Cabinet in Accra. Sixty paramount chiefs, powerful in the country back from the coast, tend to combine with other elements in a political and social opposition. Fortunately, the parliamentary leader of the opposition is the moderate and upright Christian sociologist, Professor K. A. Busia. A number of the cabinet members are Christians.

We are interested in Ghana's three thousand Protestant congregations and their community of 400,000, with 300,000 children and young people in their schools. The Catholics count nearly 300,000. The Ghana (Gold Coast) Christian Council is to the fore in Africa with its important studies and conferences on Christian interaction with the religious elements of the regional culture and society. This coming December, the International Missionary Council will hold a major meeting in Ghana, to be followed by an African Christian Conference.

It must be remembered that the welfare of Ghana has foes without and within. If prayer is "dominant desire," not a few prayers of the presently powerful in some other parts of Africa are pressed for the failure of this first case of transition to independent statehood in colonial Black Africa. Not only do the men and the families of Ghana have their worth in the sight and the plan of God, but many of them are our Christian brethren. If the venture fails, the hateful cycle of exploiting oppression and of violent revolution will gain new vehemence in Africa. M.S.B.

Vol. XVII, No. 5 April 1, 1957 \$3.00 per year; 15 cents per copy

## A LAMENTABLE "PROTESTANT" STRATEGY

SINCE ITS formation several years ago, a group known as Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State has conducted numerous forays into the "church-state problem." Most of these forays have excited either the concern or the scorn of Roman Catholics, and many more of them should have excited the concern and the scorn of Protestants.

The most recent action of P.O.A.U. makes clear that it is undeserving of Protestant support and that its tactics should be repudiated.

The background of the recent action is this: some weeks ago a television station in Chicago cancelled plans to show the movie *Martin Luther*, clearly because of Roman Catholic pressures. It now seems clear that there were no "official" pressures, and the Chicago Chancery Office has been unequivocal in denying that it sought to incite any protest by Catholics. However, whether organized or not, a good many individual Catholics did bring pressure on the station. This action was deplored by Protestants in the Chicago area, and it was deplored by many Catholics as well. A Catholic journal, *The Commonweal*, was forthright in condemning such pressure and asserted that the action of Catholics in Chicago had set back the cause of free expression of opinion on television in an irreparably damaging fashion.

But P.O.A.U. decided to capitalize on this *cause célèbre* and, in direct retaliation for the *Martin Luther* episode, has asked the Federal Communications Commission to deny television licenses to two Jesuit universities. Its reason? The Jesuits are "aliens," because they are subject to a control that is lodged outside of the United States. Therefore, Loyola University in New Orleans and St. Louis University should be denied licenses.

This frantic maneuver by the P.O.A.U. indicates its inadequacy in coping with the presence of Catholicism in American public life. The group deplored the "tactics" which were used in Chicago to keep a Protestant point of view from getting a hearing, and then immediately turned around and employed identical tactics to keep a Catholic point of view from getting a hearing. This double standard, which says "It's all right for us to keep them off the air, but not right for them to keep us off the air," is divisive, shallow and ill-conceived.

The only clear-cut gain in the entire episode is the forthright candor of Mr. Archer, executive director of the P.O.A.U., who made his organization's motives quite clear: "Frankly our challenge to Jesuit ownership of television stations is part of a counter-attack against the sectarian pressure which has caused the banning of the film *Martin Luther* by a Chicago television station." This is Protestantism reduced to anti-Catholicism and adopting the strategy of the opposition.

Mr. Archer tries to pour oil over the waters he has thus troubled by asserting that his organization's stand "is not based upon any opposition to [the Jesuits'] religious principles." Would that there were forthrightness here! For this disclaimer will not stand even superficial scrutiny. Of course the P.O.A.U.'s stand is based on opposition to the Jesuits' religious principles, i.e., that a member of the Society of Jesus is responsible to the head of that order, whether he be an American citizen or an Italian citizen or whatever, and that the ultimate spiritual allegiance of any Catholic, whether Jesuit or not, is to the Pope, who happens at this writing to be a European. What the P.O.A.U.'s position boils down to is this: American Catholics can be full-fledged Americans only if they cease to be Catholics. *Quod est absurdum.*

It is furthermore disconcerting to ponder the implication that an American citizen is an "alien" if he gives his allegiance to someone above and beyond the United States of America. Perhaps the "Other Americans" in the organization's name have no problem here and can assert that their ultimate allegiance is to Uncle Sam. But the "Protestants" in the group ought to recognize that their allegiance is presumably not to Uncle Sam but to God (who at last reports was *not* an American citizen), a God made known in Jesus Christ (who, unlike the Pope, is not even a European, but lived all his life in that questionable part of the world known as the Middle East).

In short, it is impossible to take this latest action of the P.O.A.U. seriously. But the fact that the group gives the impression of speaking for all Protestants and that it can get newspaper headlines even for the tactics just described, makes it necessary for American Protestants not only to repudiate such shallow revenge action, but also to disassociate themselves in large numbers from an organization so ill-equipped to speak in their name.

R.M.B.

# A Step Forward in Catholic-Protestant Understanding

ROBERT McAFEE BROWN

THE VEXING problem of "Catholic-Protestant relations" seems to progress and retrogress almost at the whim of the spokesmen from each side. In many areas, Protestant attitudes toward Catholics are informed almost entirely by local circumstances—the priest "lays down the line" to his flock about how to vote on a bill to legalize bingo, and Protestants have sufficient "evidence" to impugn Catholicism at every point.

## Clerical Collars—Hard and Soft

In the higher echelons there are typical actions and reactions, the dreary sameness of which is highly predictable. One can absolutely count on the fact, for example, that every second issue or so *The Christian Century* will make a statement about the menace of Rome which seems to have been diabolically constructed to stir up the greatest possible amount of hostility. This statement will then be picked up, quoted, commented upon, and made the occasion for counterstatements in all of the Catholic journals. (I sometimes think that the most avid readers of *The Christian Century* are Roman Catholics.)

And let it be said, not parenthetically but prominently, that very often the injured Catholic reactions are more than justified. A good example of this occurred recently when a *Christian Century* editorial writer commented that Catholic characterizations of our morality "ought to make us very hot under our soft Protestant collars." By way of illustration, he quoted the following description from *The Springs of Morality: A Catholic Symposium* (John M. Todd, editor):

"a somewhat negative content, comprising total abstinence, censorship of literature, the Victorian Sunday; in other words to be in a Puritan strain alien to a healthy Catholic tradition."

There was considerable reason for Catholics to get hot under their hard clerical collars at this kind of treatment, for the full passage from which the quotation was taken reads as follows:

"The distinctive features of Protestant morality in this country [England] could be summed up, for many people, in the phrase 'the Nonconformist conscience.' In its popular usage, this is often taken to have a somewhat negative content, comprising total abstinence, censorship of literature, the Victorian Sunday; in other words to be in a Puritan strain alien to a healthy Catholic tradition. But this is an inadequate appreciation of a vigorous force

*which, in its hey-day, had a profound influence on all branches of our national life"*  
(p. 70, italics added).

In other words, the Catholic writer was denying the accuracy of the description of Protestant morality quite as roundly as was the soft-collared editorial writer of *The Christian Century*. This kind of polemic can do nothing but harm, and its very capriciousness is an index not only of how unnecessary it is, but of how likely it is to continue, since emotion is accepted as a more ultimate court of appeal than truth.

On such levels as these, the "controversy" is sure to continue. Add to all of this the likelihood of John Kennedy emerging as a possible candidate for the White House in 1960, and it is clear that in the next 3½ years all of the old stock arguments about "Catholics in politics," plus a good many new ones, will be hauled out, aired and employed with an increasing intensity, bitterness and vigor.

Fortunately, not all of the discussion between Protestants and Catholics is of this sort. There is another level of discussion of the Catholic-Protestant problem which is proceeding quietly but none the less significantly. It consists of a theological grappling with what is distinctive both about Protestantism and Catholicism and proceeds from the conviction that each group must understand its opposite number as well as itself. And to the person who replies that theology is irrelevant here and that what matter are the "real issues," it must be urged that only on the basis of theology, particularly the theology of the church, does either the Protestant or the Catholic actually have a standpoint from which to discuss with relevance such issues as the relation of church and state, the question of Catholics (or Protestants) in public office, the matter of possible government aid to parochial schools, and all the rest. Protestants are particularly at fault here since their attitude is usually dictated not by positive convictions, but simply by the position of the opposition—i.e., if Catholics muster support for a given bill in a legislature, it must be *per se* bad, and Protestant strategy is defined as opposing what the Catholics want.

This is not only bad politics but bad theology. Therefore, a clearer examination by both Catholics and Protestants of their own and each others' faiths cannot help but shed some new light on the vexing question of how those faiths are to be related.



There have been some significant overtures from the Catholic side in recent years. Catholics are clearly trying not only to understand Protestantism better, but to probe the matter of the Catholic appraisal of Protestantism. Karl Adam's *One and Holy* is a notable example of this sort of concern in Germany, as is W. H. Van De Pol's *The Christian Dilemma* an example of the same concern in Holland. Henry St. John's *Essays in Christian Unity* is only one of many such studies to appear in England (where the problem usually centers on the relationship of Roman Catholicism to the Church of England). From France has come George Tavard's very helpful and suggestive *The Catholic Approach to Protestantism*, and also from France a new work, just translated into English, which is the fullest treatment of the whole lot, Father Louis Bouyer's *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism* (Newman Press, 1956, 234 pp., \$3.75). It is interesting, and not a little discouraging, that most of the significant material originates overseas and that few Catholic writers have addressed themselves to the problem in a distinctively American context.

### **The Spirit of Protestantism**

It will be worthwhile to look in some detail at Father Bouyer's book since it represents the fullest attempt so far to tell Catholics what Protestantism really is, and since it does so in a manner which is remarkably free from the distortions and polemics which usually characterize this sort of writing. One of the things which is hardest for Protestants to come to terms with is the monumental inability of most Catholic writers to have any feeling for what the Reformers were trying to do. The use in popular Catholic thought of the word "revolt" instead of "reformation" indicates the general temper of thought: the Reformers were the "bad guys" who couldn't take the rigors of Catholic discipline and took the easy way out by founding "churches of their own."

Thus much popular Catholic interpretation. But not thus Father Bouyer. For here is a man who has taken the trouble to get inside the positive meaning of the Reformation. (The fact that Father Bouyer is a convert from the Lutheran ministry indicates that at one time he apparently did stand "inside" the meaning, and one is grateful that, having repudiated that heritage, he can nevertheless still expound faithfully its positive worth.) Father Bouyer says many things about the creativity of the Reformers which Catholic readers would never take seriously from the pen of a Protestant. They cannot dismiss these lightly, however, from the pen of Father Bouyer, for he stands as such an

eminent interpreter of his own tradition (as his remarkable *Liturgical Piety* bears witness) that he is clearly beyond the pale of suspicion.

It is Father Bouyer's contention that what he calls "the positive principles of the Reformation" were in no sense a departure from biblical faith, but were a much needed recovery in Christendom of the central Christian affirmations. He documents this contention in his chapter-long treatments of the main themes of the Reformers—the free gift of salvation, the sovereignty of God, *solī Deo gratia*, justification by faith, and the sovereign authority of Scripture. Where most Catholic polemics would assert that these are precisely the heretical aberrations which severed the unity of Christendom, Father Bouyer contends that they represent the heart and center of the Christian faith.

In his documentation, Father Bouyer illustrates his contentions by means of copious quotations from Luther and Calvin. He cites the best material from these writers, rather than the familiar catena of quotations which show them at their worst and which are the stock in trade of so much of the denigration of the Reformers. He is aware that it was fidelity to the gospel which underlay the intention of all that the Reformers did. He is careful not to misinterpret the meaning of their central assertions—he avoids, for example, the common mistake of equating justification by faith with rampant individualism.

Again and again, Father Bouyer makes plain that the Reformers were recapturing the heritage of Christendom which had been lost in late medieval Christendom. He argues, for example, that the supposed "pessimism" of the Reformation doctrine of man is "precisely that of Christian tradition." He believes that the "magnificent conception of the *solī Deo gloria* of Calvin" is "not Calvin's creation [but] derives . . . quite definitely from the Bible itself and from the purest Christian tradition" (although he goes on to assert, erroneously as it seems to the present writer, that "it was through the medium of Luther that Calvin reached these sources"). This Catholic scholar believes that Calvin's system is "the strict application of a profoundly religious insight, whose validity Catholics should find it quite impossible to dispute." He understands, too, how Protestantism stands in relation to the Scripture: "Far from being a religion of the book, [Protestantism] is a religion of the Word, the religion of the God who speaks . . . Throughout the history of Protestantism, the Word of God remains, in its essence, the proclamation of a living 'good news,' which is always identified with Christ . . ."

## The Forms of Protestantism

I do not see how a Protestant could say these things better. Father Bouyer has done a careful and adequate job of explaining how it is that Protestantism sees itself, and how it conceives of its own positive affirmations.

Would, therefore, that we could leave the matter there. But the difficulty is that so far only the first half of the book has been discussed. After 135 pages there is a radical shift in the course of the argument, and Father Bouyer goes on, after this very fair and lucid descriptive matter, to examine what are to him the inherent weaknesses of Protestantism and to indicate why, for him, the person who is truly dedicated to the principles of the Reformation must find his spiritual home in the Church of Rome. Thus Protestant readers, having found themselves much in sympathy with the first 135 pages, will find themselves disappointed and in many ways irritated by the rest of the book, while Catholic readers in their turn may be very uneasy when reading the first half, and only begin to be sure that their author is not a heretic when they get to the latter portions of his material.

This is not to say that the Protestant reader should be disappointed or irritated because Father Bouyer turns out to be a Roman Catholic after all, and a very committed one at that. Surely such a point of view must be granted to a priest of the Church of Rome! No, the problem for the Protestant reader is that in the second half of his work, Father Bouyer seems to "take back" almost all of what he had initially asserted about the power of the Reformation. A brief examination of his thesis and some comments on it should indicate why this is so.

Granting the power of the "positive principles of the Reformation," Father Bouyer turns to discuss the "negative" elements. He feels that Protestantism, as such, cannot remain true to its Reformation heritage but, with a kind of "mysterious fatality," draws negative implications from it which destroy it. The "forms" of Protestantism thus defeat its "spirit" (hence the title), and if these positive principles are to be conserved, as they must be, the inevitable conclusion follows that they must be conserved within the Roman Church. Thus "the Catholic Church [is] necessary to the full flowering of the principles of the Reformation."

What are some of these negative elements? Among others, they include the confusion of the doctrine of *sola gratia* with a doctrine of "extrinsic justification," a "denial of the objective value of the sacraments," "an absolute denial of the au-

thority of the Church," and "a fictitious opposition set up between the authority of the Word of God in Scripture and that of the Church in its tradition and magisterium." Father Bouyer maintains that these Protestant heresies originate in nominalist philosophy. That is to say, they are the survival "within Protestantism of what was most vitiated and corrupt in the Catholic thought of the close of the Middle Ages." Thus he feels that the real tragedy of the Reformation is that it was not radical enough; it failed to emancipate itself from medieval nominalism.

But worse than this, so Father Bouyer argues, the positive principles which *were* present in early Protestantism soon became subject to decay; historically, Protestantism has led to what is practically its own opposite, for out of Protestant orthodoxy emerged the emasculated Protestant liberalism of recent history. He traces this shift in a highly instructive (and also highly telling) fashion, though the strength of his historical excursion is more than a little vitiated by the conclusion that, "if 'orthodox' Protestants regularly beget 'liberal' Protestants, the 'neo-orthodox' whom the liberals engender in their turn, only bring forth atheists."

Even the "revivals" which Father Bouyer concedes take place from time to time within Protestantism are unsatisfactory, since what they actually do is to perpetuate the negative rather than the positive elements of the faith. Thus the argument comes round full circle every time: a recovery of the positive principles of the Reformation will lead a true Reformer back to the Church of Rome.

This brief summary of the second half of the book should indicate what, from a Protestant reader's perspective, are both its strength and weakness. A Protestant reader is certainly not entitled to object to the fact that the argument *does* come full circle every time; this could be predicted in advance in a book by a Catholic priest. What is troubling, however, as was suggested above, is the curious route by which the author comes to his conclusions. For Father Bouyer now seems to be denying the very validity inherent within the positive principles he so recently had espoused.

For example. We are now told that the Calvinist doctrine of the sacraments is "riddled by Zwinglianism" in such a way as to deny the doctrine of the real presence. Or we are told that the God of Calvin is the "God of Sinai." (Wilhelm Niesel's recently translated *Theology of Calvin*, published by Westminster Press, should take care of that one.) Protestant sacraments are only a

"juggling with signs of divine objects." In the place of divine authority in the church, "Protestantism sets up purely human ones." Churches of the Reformed tradition "*always* end up by delivering over their members to the subjective views of each minister" (*italics added*). And so on.

Now surely any Protestant would want to challenge the adequacy and the accuracy of each of these and countless other statements. And when Father Bouyer comes to a discussion of Barth in the second half of his book, Barth is quite unrecognizable. The notion, for example, that Barth has a theology which "is designed precisely to avoid any real contact of God and man" simply cannot be taken seriously by anyone who has even the slightest acquaintance with the *Kirchliche Dogmatik*.

#### Ongoing Conversation

I think these examples indicate the patent fact that no one can ever completely understand a living faith from which he himself stands apart. There are, however, *degrees* of understanding, and Father Bouyer has surely penetrated further into an understanding of the Reformation than most contemporary Catholic thinkers who write on the subject. The book, therefore, lays at the door of the Protestant the task of trying, in some kind of ongoing conversation, to clarify what are the underlying and fundamental issues at stake. Have we really, for example, worked out a significant understanding of the doctrine of authority in Protestant thought? I do not believe that we have. On this particular issue we are vulnerable to Catholic criticism and are responsible for Catholic misunderstanding. Can we really articulate a Protestant doctrine of the church? Probably not. There are only Protestant doctrines of the *churches*, concerning which the Roman Catholic is quite understandably baffled and confused. It is on such levels as these that we must do some clear thinking if we are to develop a viable base from which to discuss the immediate and harassing issues of Catholic-Protestant understanding, which will range all the way from bills for Federal aid to education, to the propriety of seeing *Baby Doll*.

Father Bouyer has helped us to see the extent to which a Roman Catholic both can and cannot grasp the spirit of Protestantism. For doing this, both Catholic and Protestant readers stand immensely in his debt. His book must be regarded as a highly significant next step in the ongoing ecumenical discussion—a discussion which will bear fruit to just the degree that his contribution is taken seriously on both sides.

## WORLD CHURCH: NEWS AND NOTES

### Religious Leaders Urge President to Give Leadership Amid Racial Tensions

A group of nationally-known Christian clergymen, Protestant and Catholic, white and Negro, living in the North, impressed by the recent appeals uttered by groups of Negro clergymen in the South have received intimations of appeals to be made in the near future by white Southern clergymen as well. Accordingly they have wished to define their own position in the situation these Southern clergymen discuss, and have issued the following statement:

Much national publicity has been given recently to the doings of movements recently organized in the South for the purpose of spreading high-powered white-supremacy propaganda. The recrudescence of the Ku Klux Klan arouses memories of the Klan's far-flung activities in days which the present generation expected had passed forever. Expressions of antagonism and even hate directed at certain groups of citizens have already mushroomed into open violence and have created widespread tension and fear.

Passions of hate and violence readily inflame the minds of emotionally unstable people. Abundant evidence is at hand that inflammatory printed material is being circulated and distributed from centers in widely scattered parts of the country. Proliferation of such anti-social material is a deadly blow to the sincere efforts that citizens of all faiths are making to further the cause of civic peace.

The undersigned, clergymen of various Christian faiths, believe they are voicing the sentiments of a considerable number of fellow citizens who are deeply concerned about this unwelcome appearance in our midst. We earnestly hope that this concern may become general. We feel that the proper authorities, both state and federal, should look much more closely into this disturbing situation. The emergence of violence and hate is a problem that concerns the entire nation, and we would welcome a stronger leadership from our President. Now that our Vice President is extending the greetings of the American people to the newly born Republic of Ghana, it would be unfortunate if the impression was conveyed to this Negro nation, assuming for the first time its full political responsibilities, that our government was indifferent to the situation of its own Negro citizens.

At the same time, it is fitting that we express our admiration for the courage and truly Christian spirit of those far-seeing citizens, clergy and laity alike, who are working for peace and better understanding in the troubled areas of the South. Their efforts have already borne more fruit than the nation at large is aware of. We are convinced that their attempts to solve the difficult problem of their own communities in their own way should have the support of the people of the entire nation. The keen distress of the moment does not

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## MOVIES

### BABY DOLL

There is an undeniable quality of rawness in the film *Baby Doll*. To identify this as a realistic portrayal of sensuality or degeneracy is to interpret the story too literally. The focus of interest is not on the psychological perversion that leads an adolescent girl to marry a middle-aged man and then refuse to consummate the marriage. Nor is it on southern "social decay" that produces animalistic "poor white trash." It is also inadequate to declare that what is portrayed in this simple story is the more universal motif of life's comic grotesqueness: that man's plight is laughable rather than worthy of pity and terror.

There is great appeal in the latter interpretation. Clearly the action of the plot is not a function of human resolve, rational destiny, or divine redemption. The prime movers here are repression and compensation, lust and greed, attraction and fear. Life, as pictured, is and remains ambiguous, and it is more appropriate to laugh than to weep about it. But even this interpretation is unable to carry the burden of the film's great art. The components of that art are chosen and interwoven with precision and purpose. It isn't just anyone, it is a Sicilian who is the ominous threat to Baby Doll's husband. The enemy's weapon is his Syndicate Cotton Gin. The repossession of the Ideal Pay-As-You-Go-Plan furniture takes place within days of Baby Doll's twentieth birthday when, according to her wedding deal now invalidated, she was to have been "ready for marriage." These and a host of other visual, audio and dramatic images constitute a mosaic of complexity and integrity which is not required by realism or surrealism. One can identify the theme of this film as life's possible degeneracy or as life's actual comic grotesqueness only by ignoring or by reducing to contrived irrelevance roughly half of the artistic material.

Let it be conceded that the characters, though not normal, are still believable. Perhaps this is a requirement of good drama. It doesn't have to be its preoccupation. Baby Doll, her husband Archie Lee, and Archie Lee's antagonist, Mr. Vacarro, are not so much personalities as personifications of social groups. Baby Doll as the Old South is proud and parasitical, alluring and aloof, beautiful and seductive. Simply putting up with her, amusement at her, lust for her are all parts of her adult environment that frighten her and force her to recoil. She is not psychologically infantile so much

as historically very young, yearning nostalgically for the days when Daddy, the old economy, kept her warm and secure in the nursery. She maintains her virginity against her unlovely husband and the unloving marriage that practical necessity required. The legal but not natural husband, Archie Lee, is Native Born but not properly Old South. In him pride and dignity have been sacrificed on the altar of economic self-preservation. Archie Lee is a poor substitute for Daddy; he can't keep up the payments on the Ideal furniture which Baby Doll so desperately needs to remind her of her past in the dilapidated mansion of her present. Beauty which longs to be dignified and delicate refuses to cohabit with ugly necessity that is undignified, indelicate, and—worse—unsuccessful. Doctors and tranquillity pills are powerless to help the husband in his frustration.

Archie Lee strikes out frantically against the enemy who even makes a mockery of his patience. Independent cotton ginner Archie Lee is economically so impotent in the face of the Syndicate Cotton Gin that he must give up the Ideal furniture two days before the promised marriage consummation, and with the furniture goes the promise. Archie Lee's desperate arson is supposed to make Vacarro, the Syndicate Gin's immigrant boss, dependent upon him. Ironically Archie Lee succeeds only in making himself the servant of Vacarro's vengeance as well as of his economic power. Vacarro, the New South, is all threat to Archie Lee. He is sinister fun and potential rescue to Baby Doll. In the end, Vacarro's relentless energy, shrewdness, and revenge has stripped Archie Lee of his livelihood, his dignity, his marriage, and even his freedom. Baby Doll and her pitiable Aunt Rose Comfort have seen in Vacarro, and the rough but playful and attentive flattery of which he is capable, the faint promise of paradise regained. After a nightmarish game of hide and seek and Vacarro's sympathetic nap in Baby Doll's crib, Baby Doll is ready for marriage. She no longer needs to escape from him and now longs to escape with him. But Vacarro's business is accomplished at the stroke of twelve which announces Baby Doll's twentieth birthday, when the affidavit he secured from her sends Archie Lee off to jail. Baby Doll's pathetic lines to Aunt Rose on the front porch of their emptiness are echoed by the entire Old South: "There is nothing we can do but wait till tomorrow and see if we are remembered or forgotten."

The role of the Negro deserves at least a parenthetical comment. He is portrayed as a spectator to rather than a participant in Archie Lee's prob-

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lems. There is a century of defiant laughter in the way in which he is doubled over by the intensely funny episodes in Archie Lee's bizarre plight.

This is not a story of moral or social degeneracy. It is not a slice of life produced by a decaying South. It is not the universal situation of man. The characters are symbols of cultural forces of a South in transition. Moralists who oppose and those who defend this as a treatment of sex are victimized by their own literal-mindedness. An interesting essay could be written on why we are disposed to take sex so seriously that we cannot see its metaphorical power. This is another indication of how far removed we are from the world of biblical thought which is unembarrassed in its rich and transparent use of sexual and marriage parables. The rawness and the sex in Kazan-Williams' story is reminiscent of Hosea, though the theme of their allegory is quite different. Their film has little or no cynicism or despair. It has purposeful humor and sympathetic sadness. The theme may not be great but it is handled skillfully and with consistency and integrity. Our catharsis is not one of pity and terror, nor of emptiness and despair, nor of guilt and judgment. It is one of apprehension rather than comprehension of a plight that is neither universal nor abnormal but important.

ROBERT A. GESSERT  
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## WORLD CHURCH: NEWS AND NOTES

(Continued from Page 38)

quench our hope that the justice and charity of our Saviour's Gospel will in the long run prevail.

Signers of the statement are Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, President of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A., the Rt. Rev. Angus Dun, Bishop of the Washington Cathedral, the Rev. John LaFarge, S. J., Associate Editor of *America*, Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, Vice President of Union Theological Seminary, Dr. Liston Pope, Dean of Yale University Divinity School, and Dr.

### In Our Next Issue

PAUL G. HOFFMAN writes about foreign aid and the need for a program of economic development for that third of humanity that lives in the underdeveloped areas of the world.

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James H. Robinson, Pastor of the Church of the Master in New York City.

## Efforts to Suppress the Church in East Germany Intensified

WEST BERLIN (NLC)—Intensified efforts by the Communist Government of East Germany to suppress the church were reported here to the national synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID).

Delegates were told that the East German State is waging a stepped-up campaign, directed particularly at youth, to discredit the church and substitute state-sponsored programs for church activities.

The new moves were documented in a special study on church-state relations in the East Zone made by the All-German Evangelical Synod and presented to the synod's meeting early in March by Dr. Gunther Jacob, general superintendent of the Church of Berlin-Brandenburg.

Dr. Jacob told the synod that the entire East German school system is now directed toward promoting student participation in the Communist sponsored Youth Dedication ceremonies designed to serve as a substitute for church confirmation. The entire curriculum of public schools is "deeply rooted in materialistic philosophy," he reported, and state authorities are even trying to gain greater influence among theological faculties.

Noting that the only bright spot in the picture was the relative ease with which churchmen can now obtain permits to cross the border on church visits, he said that "The church is not concerned about the political aspects of life in East Germany, but about the dangers to human beings for which they are responsible."

## CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS

*A Christian Journal of Opinion*

537 WEST 121 ST. • NEW YORK 27 • N. Y.

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